Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2016 Final Report

General Information

Date: 09/20/2021

Project Title: Shell Rock River Habitat Restoration Program - Phase V

Funds Recommended: $1,200,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2016, Ch. 172, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 5(i)

Appropriation Language: $1,200,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Shell Rock River Watershed District to acquire in fee, restore, and enhance aquatic habitat in the Shell Rock River watershed. A list of proposed acquisitions, restorations, and enhancements must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

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Location Information

County Location(s): Freeborn.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Prairie

Activity types:

- Protect in Fee
- Restore
- Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Habitat

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

The Phase V Habitat Restoration Program completed a Wedge Creek Vegetative Restoration, a Pickerel Lake Site Channel/Wetland Restoration, a Miller Tract Wetland Restoration and purchased 3 key targeted acquisitions: Owens, Schroeder, and the Mud Lake Property. As a result 211 acres of habitat were protected, enhanced or restored.

Process & Methods

With The Phase 5 Habitat Restoration Program the District completed 3 acquisitions along with wetland restorations and vegetation enhancements.

For each of the land acquisitions the process starts the same, the District works with a willing landowner and enters into an option to purchase the property. Once the Option is signed, the District completes a survey and an appraisal of the property. The District then negotiates with the landowner an acceptable offer and executes the purchase agreement and completes final closing requirements. Property acquisitions include the Owens, Schroeder and Mud Lake Property.

The Owens acquisition was 45 acres of agricultural ground that was purchased and now includes 2 wetland ponds of 25 acres with the remaining ground planted into native upland prairie mix. The property will be donated to the DNR and will be joined into the Upper Twin Lake WMA. The Mud Lake Property was 23 acres in size and will be permanently protecting mesic hardwood forests and wetlands. This property will be adding to the adjoining Magaksica WMA that is expanding current habitat corridors. The final acquisition is the Schroeder acquisition at 22 acres in size. This property was in agricultural row crop production and included a portion of untouched meandering stream. This property now has been planted into natives and is protecting that meandering stream and the mesic hardwoods that surrounds the stream. Further restoration of the side for wetland restoration is planned in future funding efforts.

Following restoration and enhancement projects include the Miller Wetland, Wedge Creek Reach 1 Vegetative restoration and the Pickerel Lake Site #12 Channel Restoration. The Miller wetland project partnered with the USFWS in which $461,000 in federal match was added to the grant as a result of their Iowa, Chicago & Eastern WPA acquisition dollars. This wetland restoration turned agricultural ground into upland plantings and wetlands by disabling field tile and completing wetland scrapes. The project came in under bid, and that is why we have additional funds to return to the OHF. This project expands current restored parcels and will benefit waterfowl, pollinators and songbirds.

For the Wedge Creek Reach #1 vegetative restoration the District, following procurement procedures, hired a contractor to remove invasive species and complete controlled burns on the site. This allows native plants to thrive in its place and impacts habitat along public waters. The Pickerel Lake Channel Restoration Project improves the breeding success of native populations by reconnecting historic spawning grounds upstream of Pickerel Lake.

How did the program address habitats of significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered species, and/or list targeted species?

Historically the Shell Rock River Watershed is a shallow lake system with diverse populations of fish, waterfowl and wildlife. An ongoing effort of modeling and monitoring has defined current impairments and invasive species

populations. Implementing site specific habitat restoration projects are progressively improving populations of native fish species, waterfowl and wildlife habitat. The Program included projects that are prioritized based on the significance of benefit to aquatic habitat, urgency of the work, availability of leverage funding, location of projects and agreement with relevant planning documents. This program uses a programmatic approach to achieve prioritized aquatic habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement of lakes, streams, and wetlands across the Watershed, to once again create the historic natural resources we once had. A number of internal and external conservation planning documents support this strategic priority resource planned approach. Targeted species include the endangered Blanding's Turtle and the special species of concern including the Marsh Wren and the Sheepnose and Round Pigtoe Mussels.

How did the program use science-based targeting that leveraged or expanded corridors and complexes, reduced fragmentation, or protected areas in the MN County Biological Survey.

SRRWD utilizes precision conservation modeling with monitoring to identify priority management zones (PMZs) on a sub-watershed basis. The PMZs are prioritized, evaluated conservation measures and project locations chosen to mitigate specific areas contributing to degradation of habitat which reduce populations of aquatic vegetation, fish, waterfowl and wildlife within the lake-shed. The PMZ is a watershed side parcel review where habitat areas were ranked on a 1 to 3 scale. This scale incorporates a variety of measures including size of the habitat complex to be protected, proximity to existing protection, location to MN County Biological Survey areas and distance to a wetland or lake water source. The Districts goal is to implement projects that receive the highest rating where there are willing landowners.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

Partners in this Phase of funding include the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, US. Fish and Wildlife Service and numerous landowners. All projects completed in Phase 5 had the support of the Albert Lea Lakes Foundation, City and County officials, the Citizen and Visitors Bureau along with neighboring landowners.

Exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects of program

The District was able to increase their in-kind match amount of what was originally allocated and was able to secure $461,000 in Federal match towards the grant. High quality projects where completed through this grant, protecting a diversity of habitat and resources.

The reduction in acres was approved via an amendment in January of 2020. The Olson property was amended to the Miller property (gaining the federal match) and there was the removal of a duplicated project that was allocated funding in a different appropriation year. All projects were completed with the funding, and some came in under contracted bid amount, leading to the return of some funding.

What other fund may contribute to this program?

- N/A

What is the plan to sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

The SRRWD relies on multiple funding sources including a citizen driven local option sales tax, local levy, and multiple public funding sources to assist the District in restoration efforts. These funding sources will allow the District to maintain existing and future natural resource management projects.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2022	Local Option Sales Tax	Maintenance Inspections by SRRWD Staff	Maintenance Implementations by SRRWD Staff	Some of the Property will be eventually owned by MN DNR and they will conduct burns/maintenance on property using their funding dollars.

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	$45,000	$45,000	$41,100	-	-	-	$45,000	$41,100
Contracts	$204,200	$450,600	$422,000	-	-	-	$204,200	$422,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	$94,700	$94,700	-	-	-	-	$94,700
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	$744,700	$417,400	$417,400	-	$461,000	Federal Match	$744,700	$878,400
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	$128,300	$192,300	$182,000	$40,000	-	Local Option Sales Tax	$168,300	$182,000
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	$15,000	-	-	-	-	-	$15,000	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	$62,800	-	-	-	-	-	$62,800	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$1,200,000**	**$1,200,000**	**$1,157,200**	**$40,000**	**$461,000**	**-**	**$1,240,000**	**$1,618,200**

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Assistant	0.3	1.0	$16,100	-	-	$16,100
Program Manager	0.43	1.0	$25,000	-	-	$25,000

Explain any budget challenges or successes:
The budget did change slightly as projects moved forward, this is due to contractors budgets coming in slightly higher or lower than what was expected. All projects were completed and the SRRWD has a slight amount of funds to return, but greatly increased the match towards this grant.

Total Revenue: $0

Revenue Spent: $0

Revenue Balance: $0

Of the money disclosed above, what are the appropriate uses of the money:

- E. This is not applicable as there was no revenue generated.

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Acres (AP)	Total Acres (Final)
Restore	790	80	0	0	0	0	0	0	790	80
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	0	27
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	70	63	70	63
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	180	41	180	41
Total	**790**	**80**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**250**	**131**	**1,040**	**211**

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Funding (AP)	Total Funding (Final)
Restore	$275,800	$427,400	-	-	-	-	-	-	$275,800	$427,400
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	$124,300	-	$124,300
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	$842,400	$526,200	$842,400	$526,200
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	$81,800	$79,300	$81,800	$79,300
Total	**$275,800**	**$427,400**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**$924,200**	**$729,800**	**$1,200,000**	**$1,157,200**

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	790	80	0	0	790	80
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	0	0	0	27
Protect in Fee w/o	0	0	0	0	0	0	70	63	0	0	70	63

State PILT Liability												
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	180	41	0	0	180	41
Total	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1,040**	**211**	**0**	**0**	**1,040**	**211**

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	$275,800	$427,400	-	-	$275,800	$427,400
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	$124,300	-	-	-	$124,300
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	$842,400	$526,200	-	-	$842,400	$526,200
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	$81,800	$79,300	-	-	$81,800	$79,300
Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**$1,200,000**	**$1,157,200**	**-**	**-**	**$1,200,000**	**$1,157,200**

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

9 Miles

Outcomes

Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced shallow lakes and wetlands ~ *Outcomes will be measured and evaluated by the increase of use days for migrating waterfowl and increased angler success as a result of improved habitat in shallow lakes. The protected, restored and enhanced shallow lakes, wetlands and streambanks will provide habitat to wildlife and support healthy natural resource conditions for long term benefits.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?
No

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Miller Tract Wetland Restoration	Freeborn	10223201	75	$201,300	No
Wedge Creek Reach 1	Freeborn	10221206	41	$72,500	No
Pickerel Lake Site 12	Freeborn	10222213	5	$40,300	No

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Mud Lake Property	Freeborn	10222212	27	$140,000	No
Owens Property	Freeborn	10221230	40	$400,000	No

Protect Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
Schroeder Property	Freeborn	10121233	23	$280,000	No	2	$0

Protect in Easement
Protect in Fee with PILT
Protect in Fee W/O PILT
Restore
Enhance
Other

Parcel Map
Shell Rock River Habitat Restoration Program - Phase V
(Data Generated From Parcel List)